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Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 by Alfred W. Crosby

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been "passed almost by default" slightly hyperbolic, for almost all have formed the basis for articles encapsulating the principal conclusions, which the authors (or their supervisors or external examiners) regarded as particularly novel.

The theses fall into two broad categories. First, there are those which appear in print as they were originally submitted, including those of Madden and Robson which date from the 1950s and which, therefore, take no account of the subsequent literature on British overseas investment and on factory reform. Maria Cloni's volume on *Women and law in Elizabethan England with particular reference to the Court of Chancery*, based on her 1974 thesis, seems less likely to have been invalidated by recent research, for none of the original thesis has appeared in print. The same is true of Toomey's study of *Vivian and sons, 1809-1924* (1979) a history of the major copper smelting company and of Valerie Johnston's *Diet in workhouses and prisons, 1835-1895*. The second category includes those which have an introduction or preface explaining the degree to which each thesis as submitted has been "modified" (Duffy, *Bankruptcy and insolvency in London during the industrial revolution* (1973); or "corrected", as was that by Sacks, *Trade, society and politics in Bristol, 1500-1640* (1977); or "revised", as was *Ludwig Mond and the British alkali industry* (1984) by J. R. Lischka; or slightly amended as in the case of Higgs, *Domestic servants and households in Rochdale, 1851-71* (1979). Higgs's introduction is quite disarming, for in it he refers to three articles, two in print and one forthcoming, in which he has set down his most recent thoughts on the subject—which to do not correspond exactly to those contained in the thesis.

Historians who are familiar with the various articles written by Hueckel might be surprised to discover that the thesis which was the source, on the effects of the Napoleonic wars, is only 210 pages; this compares with the longest thesis, by Cottrell (1,000 pages) on the International Financial Society, which in its printed form together is priced at nearly £80 (equivalent to the cost of roughly thirteen inter-library loans and also subject to an additional 10 per cent surcharge if ordered outside the US and Canada). This, together with the Sacks volume, is the most expensive of the series, yet like the remainder (including eight priced at more than c. £35 each) lacks an index, a disappointing omission which underlines the appeal of most of the monographs in this series principally to research specialists—whose needs university librarians may feel might be served satisfactorily, and more economically, by the occasional £6 inter-library loan.

Mirowski's book, *The birth of the business cycle* has left the original thesis completed in 1979 behind, excludes one section already published in article form, and has been reorganized in order to integrate theoretical with historical material.

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GENERAL

ALFRED W. CROSBY. *Ecological imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986. Pp. xiv+368. Ill. 7 figs. 22 plates. £27.50; paperback £9.95.)

It is a rare book that cites my favourite agricultural history title, 'The Adobe brick as a historical source'. This one does, besides an enormous range of the obscure sources needed to make a close reconstruction of the ecological and demographic consequences of European expansion. That expansion is conceived as including the spread of the whole "living entourage" of Europe's weeds, animals and disease

organisms as well as the spread of the plain European humanity. The chosen targets of overseas diffusion are the "neo-Europes". These are lands in the same general climatic band as Europe, yet beyond the marine *cordon sanitaire* that had kept old world species from competing in the simpler ecosystems of the Americas and Australasia.

The book concentrates on the plants and animals and diseases that went out from Europe and exploded so mightily on the prairies, the pampas and in the outback that the book might have been called *Ecological detonation*. The author first steps back to discuss the chiefly ecological, partly medical, reasons why medieval European expansion stalled in Greenland and the Holy Land, goes on to document its success and impact in the proving grounds of the Atlantic islands, and explains how the global wind systems were finessed by simple theories of symmetrical circulation so as to permit bolder voyaging. Next he gives us a series of chapters in which he considers the spread of weeds, animals and disease organisms in north and south America and Australia before settling on what has been called the "witless menagerie" of New Zealand as an example that will sum up the effects.

Crosby then reverts to considering the conditions in the neo-Europes which favoured weeds sprouting like Jack's Beanstalk, the runaway breeding of feral animals, and the multiplication of people from Europe. Long ecological and epidemiological isolation had disarmed the neo-Europes. Much that the Europeans brought, both deliberately and by accident, was able to run wild. They were themselves. This saga is familiar in outline but here it is assembled in a neat fashion, with many suggestive touches that illuminate the chain reactions as species forged like wildfire through the new lands. I found myself reading on without taking notes; the style itself is disarming, the only intrusions coming every page or two in some enviable turn of phrase or striking metaphor.

Where the book draws together arguments about the pre-European ecological history of the neo-Europes it strikes its most exciting note. Crosby's idea is that the palaeolithic invaders of these lands, the Amerindians and Aborigines, had already done a very great deal of ecological damage of their own, if damage is not too tendentious a term, which no doubt it is despite free use nowadays to describe the European arrival. What he demonstrates is how far the earlier arrivals had wiped the slate clean of potential competitors with humanity and its beasts. This depends on accepting that the megafaunal extinctions were the work of hunters, another familiar case that is well put here. Species from Europe found "vacated niches" as the legacy of ancient overkill. Successive, immensely widely spaced, waves of human invaders thus moulded the present ecosystems and formed the agricultural capital of the Americas and Australasia. It is certainly in tune with recent work on Australia to be told that the Europeans and their entourage were pouring through a door half-opened by the "ecological imperialism" of their aboriginal predecessors.

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BARBARA A. HANAWALT (Ed.). *Women and work in preindustrial Europe*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1986. Pp. xviii+233. \$32.50; paperback \$10.50.)

The practitioners of "women's history" are suspected of allowing feminist zeal to override the historian's duty to attempt to explain the past on its own terms. At first sight these essays appear to confirm such suspicions by their use of jargon such as "sex-specific role", "weak work-identity", "career-profile", "familial role" and an abundance of "life-cycles", which suggest to the reader the contemporary attitudes